

2025-26 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIFTH & AVI AVITAL

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.
Classical California midday host
Alan Chapman

Thursday, May 7, 2026 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, May 8, 2026 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, May 9, 2026 @ 8 p.m.

Anna Rakitina, conductor
Avi Avital, mandolin
Pacific Symphony

MOZART Overture to *The Abduction from the Seraglio*,
K.384

FAZIL SAY Mandolin Concerto—*U.S. Premiere*
Avi Avital mandolin

—INTERMISSION—

TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64
Andante - Allegro con anima
Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza
Valse: Allegro moderato
Finale: Andante maestoso - Allegro vivace



ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Anna Rakitina, guest conductor



Anna Rakitina has firmly established herself as one of the most exciting and sought-after conductors of her generation following a series of highly acclaimed appearances with Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras as well as the New York Philharmonic, LA Phil, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig,

Staatskapelle Dresden, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra.

In 2025, Rakitina received the prestigious European Cultural Award in recognition of her extraordinary talent and remarkable contributions to the world of classical music.

The 2025–26 season sees Rakitina make debuts with the National Symphony Orchestra Ireland, Bournemouth Symphony, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra on tour in Europe. She opens the season with Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier, with further notable appearances with Orchestre National de Lyon, SWR Symphonieorchester, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano and Turku Philharmonic, and returns to Helsingborg Symphony to conduct Brahms' *Requiem*.

Further afield, she made debuts with the Houston Symphony Orchestra and Orchestra of St Luke's in summer 2025 and returns to Asia for performances with the Malaysian Philharmonic and Korean National Symphony. An advocate of new music, she will conduct the U.S. premiere of Fazil Say's Mandolin Concerto with Avi Avital and Pacific Symphony, and the German premiere of Steingrimur Rohloff's Horn Concerto with Stefan Dohr.

In recent seasons, Rakitina has worked with orchestras such as BBC Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Dresdner Philharmonie, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Gothenburg Symphony, Norwegian National Opera Orchestra, Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. In North America, she has appeared with notable orchestras such as the Baltimore, Cincinnati, Houston, Utah, and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras.

She regularly collaborates with soloists including Joshua Bell, Renaud Capuçon, Gautier Capuçon, Augustin Hadelich, Lucas & Arthur Jussen, Gil Shaham, Christian Tetzlaff, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Jan Vogler, and Alisa Weilerstein.

She continues to champion music by today's composers including Anna Clyne, Elena Langer, and Ellen Reid. Rakitina was Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 2019 to 2023, where she was only the second woman in the orchestra's history to hold the position.

Previously, she was a Dudamel Fellow at the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the 2019–20 season. Her talents have been recognised through multiple awards, including second prize at the Malko Competition 2018, and prizes at the Deutscher Dirigentenpreis 2017 and the TCO International Conducting Competition Taipei 2015.

Anna Rakitina grew up in a musical family and began her education as a violinist before studying conducting at the Moscow Tchaikovsky

Conservatory with Stanislav Dyachenko and later in Hamburg with Prof. Ulrich Windfuhr. She was a finalist of 'Das kritische Orchester' in 2018 in Berlin and participated in Lucerne Festival Academy's conducting fellowship scheme led by Alan Gilbert and Bernard Haitink.

She has attended masterclasses with Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Vladimir Jurowski, Johannes Schlaefli, and the 2022 Ammodo Masterclass conducting Concertgebouwworkest led by Fabio Luisi. Anna Rakitina lives in Berlin with her family.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Avi Avital, mandolin



"Here is a musician who recognizes no boundaries except those of good taste, and who has the artistry to persuade listeners to follow him anywhere." *Gramophone*

The first mandolin soloist to be nominated for a classical GRAMMY®, Avi Avital has been compared to Andrés Segovia for his championship of the instrument and

to Jascha Heifetz for his extraordinary virtuosity. Passionate and "explosively charismatic" (*The New York Times*) in performance, Avital has become the driving force behind the reinvigoration of the mandolin. For more than two decades, he has reshaped both the history and future of his instrument, performing in many of the world's most prestigious halls. He has also expanded the mandolin repertoire through transcriptions and by commissioning more than 100 works, including concertos by Jennifer Higdon, Anna Clyne, Avner Dorman, and Giovanni Sollima.

Highlights from the 2024–25 season included performances with the Minnesota Orchestra, Colorado Symphony, Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, Freiburg Barockorchester, Philharmonia Baroque, Venice Baroque, and Il Pomo d'Oro. He also appeared in recital and chamber performances with Maurice Steger and Sebastian Wienand, Ksenija Sidorova, Omer Klein, and Brooklyn Rider, with returns to Cadogan Hall and Wigmore Hall in London, the Philharmonie Berlin, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Aula Magna Sapienza in Rome, Amici della Musica in Florence, Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, City Hall in Hong Kong, Orchestra Hall in Minnesota, and Herbst Hall in San Francisco.

Recent engagements include appearances with the Chicago, Seattle, Toronto, and Vancouver symphony orchestras, the LA Phil, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Israel Philharmonic, and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, among many others. He has collaborated with conductors including Zubin Mehta, Kent Nagano, Alan Gilbert, Robert Spano, Osmo Vänskä, and Ton Koopman.

In 2023, Avital launched the Between Worlds Ensemble with a three-part residency at Boulez Saal in Berlin and performances in Bucharest, Warsaw, Hamburg, Ludwigshafen, and Antwerp. The ensemble explores musical traditions across cultures and regions, drawing from classical, folk, and traditional music.

An exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist, Avital released his seventh album, *Concertos*, with Il Giardino Armonico and Giovanni Antonini. The recording won the 2024 Opus Klassik Award for Concerto Recording of the Year. Born in Be'er Sheva in southern Israel, Avital began studying mandolin at age 8. He trained at the Jerusalem Music Academy and the Conservatorio Cesare Pollini in Padua and performs on an instrument by Israeli luthier Arik Kerman. **Scan QR Code for full bio.**



PROGRAM NOTES

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: Jan. 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria

Died: Dec. 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

Overture to *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, K.384



Composed: 1781-82

Premiered: Jul. 16, 1782 at the Burgtheater in Vienna, with Mozart conducting.

Most recent Pacific Symphony

performance: Sep. 13, 2016 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting.

Instrumentation: One flute including

piccorno, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, and strings.

Approximate duration: 6 minutes.

When Mozart undertook the composition of *Abduction*, he was 25 and had recently moved to Vienna, where he was experiencing the turmoil of a tense relationship with the city's archbishop—whom he needed as a patron—and an unsettled love life. "As long as the Archbishop remains in town I shall not give a concert here," he wrote his father, and things only got worse after that. Opera, he wrote his father, was a saving grace—he would be happy to earn his living composing nothing but operas.

Upon receiving the libretto for *Abduction*, Mozart wrote that "The libretto is quite good. The subject is Turkish, and the title is *Belmonte und Constanze* or *Die Verführung aus dem Serail*. I shall write the overture, the chorus in Act I and the final chorus in Turkish style..." Some musicologists discern a possible Freudian slip here, since Mozart mistakenly uses the word for "seduction," *Verführung*, rather than "abduction," *Entführung*, precisely when he was about to propose marriage to his own Constanze—the soprano Constanze Weber.

Mozart's 1782 *Abduction* was just one of many classical compositions that reflected the popularity of Middle Eastern cultures in Europe. The fad was known as *Turquerie*, though it was not particularly Turkish; the European conception of Middle Eastern musical style was comprised mainly of an invented, generic exoticism and martial-sounding march tempos. Thumping rhythms, cymbals, tinkling percussion and vaguely foreign harmonies were all part of the mix. (The cymbals, at least, were an authentic touch; they were widely used in Arab music for centuries before their adoption in Europe.)

In opera, the Turkish craze typically stranded Italian characters among North Africans and vice-versa, giving librettists a chance to concoct improbable comic predicaments and to surround them with more than the usual local color. Unrealistic cultural stereotypes were the

rule, and the action was cartoon-like and farcical. At least three of Rossini's popular comic operas were cast from this mold: *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (1812), *The Turk in Italy* (1814), and *Adina* (1818), a one-act farce with a plot that closely resembles *Abduction*.

As the overture to *Abduction* begins, we hear the instrumental textures associated with *Turquerie* in playful, almost raucous profusion. When its rapid tempo suddenly slows, we hear a halting, lyrical melody that expresses the depths of the tenor Belmonte's love for the abducted heroine, Constanze. Then, as the overture ends, Mozart lets this melody remain unresolved, leaving us with a sense of more to come. If we were in the opera house, the curtain would rise on Belmonte, and Mozart's unresolved, dominant cadence would flow directly into Belmonte's opening aria. The action begins as he declares his love for Constanze and faces off against the dastardly Osmin.

Fazil Say

Born: 1970 in Ankara, Turkey

Mandolin Concerto



Composed: 2025

Premiered: Jul. 12, 2025 in Rendsburg-Büdelndorf, Germany at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, with the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra conducted by Nil Venditti and mandolin soloist Avi Avital.

Most recent Pacific Symphony

performance: This is a Pacific

Symphony premiere, and a U.S. premiere.

Instrumentation: Two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, percussion, strings, and solo mandolin.

Approximate duration: 25 minutes.

The remarkable Turkish composer and pianist Fazil Say has been captivating audiences and critics around the world for three decades in a way that is uniquely his own—combining Western classical repertoire with that of his Turkish heritage. He is known for his interpretations of Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, and Mozart, often providing his own cadenzas in Mozart concertos.

Since the beginning of his career, Say has performed with many renowned American and European orchestras and numerous leading conductors in music ranging from Bach to Viennese Classical Romantic and contemporary genres including his own compositions for piano. As a composer he has received commissions from leading institutions including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the BBC, Salzburg Festival, WDR, Munich Philharmonic, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Wiener Konzerthaus, Dresden Philharmonic, and the Fondation Louis Vuitton, among others. His oeuvre encompasses six

symphonies, two oratorios, several solo concertos, as well as numerous works for piano and chamber ensembles.

Say's mandolin concerto, his Op. 116, is a commissioned work that was premiered in July 2025 at the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival. He composed it in close association with its premiere artist, the mandolin virtuoso Avi Avital. It is a major contribution to the scant literature for classical mandolin, anchored by Vivaldi's mandolin concerto (1725). Say's work combines melodic, dramatic, and modern elements with a compelling opening solo cadenza.

Say was appointed Artist in Residence for the 2025-26 season at both the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival and the Gstaad Menuhin Festival. During these residencies, he performs with longtime partner orchestras—including the Camerata Salzburg, the hr-Sinfonieorchester, and the NDR Radiophilharmonie—in programs including premieres of his own newly commissioned works.

Say has built an extensive discography of over 50 recordings, released on labels such as Teldec Classics, naïve, and Warner Classics. His work has earned numerous accolades, including four ECHO Klassik Awards and a Gramophone Classical Music Award. Notable recordings include his critically acclaimed complete Beethoven piano sonatas and Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, both released by Warner Classics in January 2020. His album *Oiseaux Tristes*, released in September 2024 on Warner Classics, was awarded the 2025 OPUS KLASSIK Award in the Solo Instrumental category.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born: May 7, 1840 in Votkinsk, Russia

Died: Oct. 16, 1893 in St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64



Composed: 1888

Premiered: Nov. 17, 1888 at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg, Russia, with the composer conducting.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Oct. 3, 2021 in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Carl St.Clair conducting.

Instrumentation: Three flutes

including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, and strings.

Approximate duration: 50 minutes.

Tchaikovsky was mindful of his image as a composer whose reputation would survive him and as a public figure in Russian society. He also felt that Beethoven had elevated the symphony to a form that was reserved for big, philosophical ideas expressed in a dramatic arc. Before writing his fourth symphony, which preceded the fifth by more than a decade, he had been impressed with the musical representations of fate that he had heard in Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 and Bizet's *Carmen*, and he

made his own fourth symphony an account of a fateful struggle for his own destiny and his yearning to live a life of mature respectability. Progress on it was agonizing, and he found it difficult to resolve. But fate was a theme he would return to in his fifth symphony and in the sixth, his last.

Tchaikovsky began work on his Symphony No. 5 in May of 1888. He had just returned to Russia after an extensive and highly successful European tour, and moved into a new house in the town of Frolovskoye after visiting the larger city of Tbilisi. Musicologists note that he encountered difficulties in the symphony's composition at first, but later gained momentum; it seems likely that any obstacles would have been consistent with moving back to Russia and into a new house after his extended absence. These days we might say he was "getting his seat adjusted."

The sheer abundance of melody in Tchaikovsky's symphonies can eclipse their superb craftsmanship, but it is ever-present, both subtle and spectacular. Like all his symphonies, Tchaikovsky's Fifth is deeply personal and is characterized by a sense of yearning. It is unified by thematic elements that return in every movement, and we can associate these with Tchaikovsky's contemplation of personal fate.

In the symphony's first movement, which moves from an andante to an allegro pace, the "fate" theme comes at us with almost assaultive intensity and a sound that somehow combines funereal gravity with suspense about what might come next. The symphony progresses from this somber opening through an andante second movement that is full of Tchaikovsky's poetic melancholia. But there is also a feeling of emotional instability here, as though the sadness we have heard so far, for all its brilliance, need not inevitably prevail. Movement three, dominated by three waltzes, allows us further opportunity to relax, breathe and contemplate the emotional journey on which Tchaikovsky is taking us.

When we reach the final movement, it is clear that the music is reaching for resolution. Once it comes, it has taken us from the symphony's ominous opening in E minor to E major. Tchaikovsky worried that this symphony's finale might seem overstated or insincere, but its final movement is a glorious "blowfest" that gives all the players in the pit — not just the brass and woodwind players, who literally blow into their instruments—a chance to play loud, long and hard in passages with high stakes. In Tchaikovsky's Fifth, any choir in the orchestra can sound heroic.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. [Operahound.com](https://www.operahound.com)